



Flirting with Glowsticks

Haylee Manda Reynolds

Leschenault Press (Mar 4, 2025)

Softcover (148pp)

978-1-923020-67-2

In Haylee Manda Reynolds's poignant coming-of-age novel *Flirting with Glowsticks*, a bisexual teenager struggles to find love in a period of transience.

Chloe wants to belong in the places her parents move her to, including Connecticut and Blue Rock, Virginia. She has a crush on her gay best friend, Ezra, and dates some of the same boys as her friend Alex. Later, Chloe dates Fenix, whose abuse leads her to support her father's decision to take a new job in Virginia Beach. There, Chloe's father has an affair that changes Chloe's living situation. Chloe dates Rory and, later, Savannah, the latter of whom also dates an older man. In her mid-twenties, she negotiates marriage and her changing relationships with her parents.

The juxtaposition of Chloe's and her parents' struggles in their relationships conveys the perennial challenges of love across different life stages. The fractured nature of Chloe's life is also seen in the book's structure—its sections are separated according to Chloe's age and location. Around her, people study astrology and dance to Lady Gaga, fleshing out her LGBTQ+ communities with cultural details: "I [mapped] out the sky of the night I was born—the position of the sun, moon, and planets; the constellations ... *Who am I?* I'd asked, and it told me." Fenix's mistreatment of Chloe also strikes realistic, if devastating, notes.

Chloe's narration is intimate and resonant, though her reasons for choosing her spouse defy understanding. She doesn't consider how her relationships balance, or don't balance, with the rest of her life, which remains hazy. Still, *Flirting with Glowsticks* is a meaningful bildungsroman whose unrooted heroine seeks romantic and platonic love with people of multiple genders.

MARJORIE JENSEN (March / April 2025)

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